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WEB OF FAMILY TIES

When a son-in-law settles with his wife's parents, we occasionally get examples of matrilocal residence. But this is rare and is largely confined to the cases of a few orphans and children of very poor parents who take recourse to the method of suitor service for securing a wife and then continue to live with their parents-in-law. The joint family is approved by social tradition. The following table illustrates an ideal joint family:

	Paternal Grandparents Parents	
Brothers and their wives	Ego : Wife	Unmarried sisters
Nephews Nieces	Sons and their wives	Unmarried daughters
	Grandchildren	

It is indeed difficult to locate family units in which five generations live together under the same roof. In the villages of Andhradesa, particularly Telangana, it is impossible to find a family in which all nuclear families of three generations share a common house. Among the higher castes of the Hindus such large joint families are still met with in the small towns and cities, but they are not often seen in the villages. In actual practice joint families in this part of the country are much smaller units, and often they consist of parents and their married sons and their wives and children, or of brothers and their wives and children. While joint families are regarded as ideal, it is common for sons to separate from their parents within a few years of their marriage. As a result of this separation they start as an elementary family, which comprises at first only the husband and the wife. This elementary family gradually becomes larger as children are added to it. When sons grow up, get married and continue to live with their wives in their parental home the unit can once again be classed as a joint family. In this connection case-histories of one hundred and twenty families from the village were examined. In 34% of the cases sons had separated from their parents within two years of marriage. Thirty-six per cent separated between two and three years after marriage. Separation took place after three, but within five years of marriage in 28% cases. Only 22% of the sons were still found to be living with their parents five years after their marriage. As most marriages are between adults, effectiye married

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596 life begins almost immediately after the marriage ceremony, or at the most within six months. For the purposes of the above analysis, the year when their effective married life started has been regarded as the year of marriage.

596 Further analysis of the case-histories reveals an almost uniform
591 pattern of development in a majority of cases. For a year or so
593 after his marriage a son continues to live with his parents. His wife also lives with him. Domestic quarrels and dissensions develop within this period and compel him to start thinking about separation. In some cases this takes place in the course of the next year; in others it may take three to five years. Those who can hold together for five years generally continue to live under the same roof peacefully for a much longer period. Nevertheless, separation is known to have taken place in some cases even after ten to fifteen years of living together.

596 A young married man separating from his parents or brothers
593 generally maintains close connections with their family or families. However, as the immediate cause for separation is often a quarrel or an acute difference of opinion, for some time the separating families continue to have strained relations. They may not even be on speaking terms. With the passage of time much of the bitterness of the dispute wears off and cordiality gradually returns to the different branches of the same main family. When the relations between the main family and the seceding family are once again cordial, they start taking interest in each other's affairs and problems. Ceremonies, feasts and festivals bring them all together. Rites connected with the major crises of life are great occasions for family reunions. Particularly in the event of death old quarrels and misunderstandings are generally forgotten and all near-relations assemble for the last rites. In the rituals that follow the presence of all the branches of the family is regarded as obligatory, and the absence of anyone at such an occasion is bound to be viewed very seriously. This would almost always lead to a permanent breach of relations between the absenting unit and the other units of the same family.

596 In this context it is necessary to point out that an equivalent of the term 'family' is used in the community to denote three different social units, each varying from the other slightly. It may mean: (1) the elementary family or the 'house', (2) the extended family unit, or (3) a still larger group comprising the near-

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husband by touching his feet. She washes the husband's clothes, and eats the leavings in his plate. The husband cannot do likewise. When the wife errs, the husband reprimands her, and can abuse and beat her. However, a good wife is not expected to answer him back. Even when the husband is wrong she is supposed to bear her lot meekly and submissively. This cultural pattern is reflected in the lament of the wife over her husband's demise, when she wails, 'Where is my lord? Where is my master? Now who will support me? The shield that protected me is gone; now I am helpless.'

This, then, is the 'ideal'. Almost everyone in the village would verbalize the expected husband-wife relationship in similar words. But the reality appears to be very different; and a close study of the actual family records would reveal that these ideals are more or less a social fiction. The husband is, without doubt, superior, and has, in most families, the upper hand; but practically nowhere do we find him a completely dominant, authoritarian and patriarchal figure. Moreover, the quality of inter-personal relations between husband and wife change as they leave one stage of life and enter another.

It has been pointed out earlier that married life is started by a couple under the parental roof. During this stage, at least for the first few months, they are not supposed to show any special concern for each other. The man continues to work under the direction of his father or elder brother; the woman carries out the instructions of her mother-in-law. There is hardly any opportunity for them to meet and talk during the day, and when they do meet under the cover of darkness, possibly in a separate room, the proximity of the parents' room does not allow them the liberty of engaging in audible love-play or even of talking freely. Of necessity they have to speak in whispers. The cultural pattern demands that the wife must resist the initial advances of her husband for several nights. She often feigns complete ignorance regarding sexual matters and displays horror and disgust when the husband approaches her. After two or three weeks the wife becomes more co-operative. Now sex dominates their life for the several months that follow. There is casual conversation between the two, but in these first months household affairs are invariably not discussed by them. The husband generally speaks to her about the village affairs and his kinsfolk. He also tells her his experiences of the city.

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The girl talks to him about her childhood friends in the village and about her relations. At this stage, even if she is troubled by her mother-in-law, she would not complain to her husband about her discomforts and difficulties at home. The stereotype norms that a girl unconsciously picks up from conversation between elderly women, or consciously learns as a result of direct instruction by her mother are: 'Unless the husband is completely under your influence, do not try to take him away from his mother. When your grip over him is firm, you can persuade him to do what you like. But any premature efforts on your part will only generate distrust about you in his heart.' Thus, she begins complaining to her husband about the bad treatment that she receives from her mother-in-law and the other women relations when she is sure that the relative strength of her influence over him is greater than theirs. The husband finds himself in a dilemma. He knows that a man who 'listens too much to his wife' is an object of social scorn and ridicule. Thus if he starts taking sides with his wife, the comment of the elders would generally be against him, and even the people of his own age-group would circulate funny, but often quite imaginary, stories about his submissiveness to his wife. On the other hand, he realizes that nearly everyone at some stage has to take sides, and that even his critics have had to do so, at some point in their lives. His position becomes really difficult when he is subjected to pressure simultaneously from two directions: when the mother complains about his wife and the wife complains about his mother. To begin with, most sons ignore these complaints and accusations, and refuse to take sides. In the next stage they side with, or at least pretend to side with, the mother. For the satisfaction of the mother the son would scold the wife once or twice. If the wife takes it ill, she would refuse to speak with him when they meet in the night. The husband has then to make some efforts to console her. Often he says to her that he did not intend any of his remarks to be taken seriously. Or he may even say that the mock-scolding was meant only to satisfy the old mother. The wife takes this opportunity to narrate more accounts of sufferings that she has to undergo in the house, on account of the troublesome mother-in-law and the other deceitful female relatives. In a joint family this continues, but in a great majority of cases after some years the husband and wife secede from the main family to set up an independent household of their own.

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in life. Indirect education through folktales, parables and songs is now supplemented by direct and conscious instruction by the parents. The mother seeks to train her daughter to be a good wife; she would often say to her, 'The husband's home is very different from the home of your parents. Here you sit down and the meals are served to you by your mother; there even if you work to the point of breaking your limbs you will not have a word of appreciation. And if you do not work, your tormenting mother-in-law and sisters-in-law will not only abuse you, but will also remember your parents in the foulest language.' Through anecdotes and reminiscences, she creates a vivid picture in the daughter's mind of what she is likely to find when she leaves her first home to enter her second and real home. As the time for the girl's marriage approaches, she finds herself attached to the mother all the more. If the father disapproves of any of the ways of the girl seriously, rather than speak to her directly, he would bring the matter to the notice of her mother, through whom he would seek to influence the daughter. Of course on minor matters he can speak to her directly. Similarly, in the case of grown-up boys, when any action more serious than a mere warning, use of strong language or giving of a threat is called for it is the father and not the mother who is supposed to handle them.

When the children enter their youth and adulthood, there are further changes in the pattern of inter-personal relationships between the parents and children. By this time the girls are married off and leave the parental home to take their place as wives in the homes of their respective husbands. For three or four years they maintain a somewhat intimate and regular contact with their parental home, and their people too are interested in their adjustment and welfare in the new surroundings. Afterwards, however, the girl gets increasingly absorbed in the affairs of her own home, and the memories of childhood friends, as well as those of her parental home, gradually recede into the background. In later years, on ceremonial occasions she returns to her parental home more or less a stranger. Not that the parents are totally unconcerned about the welfare of their daughter, or that the girl has altogether forgotten them, but the distance that separates them (in time and space) gradually takes away much of the glow and warmth of the feelings which they have for one another. On the other hand, the boys also marry and their wives come home to

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the parents often say when they want to persuade one of their older children to yield to an apparently 'unreasonable demand' of the younger. When there is a quarrel between the siblings, it is invariably the elder who is admonished. 'One can understand a young child being unreasonable, but being older you should know better', the parents would say. Younger children very often complain to the parents about the older siblings; the latter prefer to deal with them personally when the parents are away. However, if the parents are too partial to their pet child, the others conspire to put him in disfavour. Spying by the younger children, when it is discovered, is punished by the older siblings. They may boycott them, refuse to speak to them, may not allow them to partake of their share of good things to eat, and may tease them in various ingenious ways. They often have a silly nickname for such a child, or they may keep on referring to some oddity in him, and thus tease and cause offence to him constantly. When they are six or seven, brothers and sisters form different groups. Aware of the pattern of male dominance, the brothers begin to regard themselves as superior to the sisters. They dislike doing anything which is regarded as 'feminine work', and if compelled to do so do not fail to express their extreme distaste. They would prefer to do it only if unobserved by their playmates, for if one of them were to notice it the 'news' would soon spread and the other boys would have funny ditties and remarks ready when next they met him. At this stage they begin to assert their superiority over their sisters. The latter must not join them in boy's games. When they are discovered engaging in anything that is regarded as particularly masculine, they are told, 'Now go and mind the pots; there is plenty to do at home.' Family histories recorded for the purpose of this study do not reveal any permanent tender emotional ties between brothers and sisters. It has already been pointed out that a few years after her marriage a girl returns more or less as a stranger to her parental home. On the other hand, there is considerable attachment between the sisters before they are married, but in their case also it gradually wears off after marriage.

The brothers either continue to live in the same house, or, if they separate, they live in the same village. Migrations are comparatively few, and even when one of the brothers moves away he continues to maintain contact with the families of his brothers